

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 22, 2021

Mr. Mark Emmert
President
The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)
700 W. Washington Street
Indianapolis, Indiana

Dear Mr. Emmert,

We write to you during Women's History Month to express deep disappointment in the disparate treatment of the men's and women's NCAA basketball tournaments. We support the request of the NCAA's Committee on Women's Athletics for an independent investigation into how the NCAA allowed these disparities to occur and to immediately provide equitable training facilities and services for athletes.¹ Additionally, we request you send signatories of this letter financial data for the NCAA women's tournament as outlined below.

On March 18, Stanford University coach Ali Kershner posted a picture on Instagram displaying the shockingly lower quality weight room equipment for the women's tournament.² In her post, Ms. Kershner juxtaposed the women's weight room and the men's weight room. Ms. Kershner's post showed women student-athletes only had access to a few dumbbells and yoga mats. In comparison, the men student-athletes had access to a large, high-end weight room facility. After Ms. Kershner's posts went viral, NBC Sports began to track other egregious discrepancies in treatment between the men's and women's tournaments.³ Participants at the women's tournament received pre-packaged meals. Men, on the other hand, had access to full buffets.⁴ The men's players received over-the-top "swag bags," while women student-athletes received a significantly smaller "swag bag."⁵

Perhaps most disturbing is the difference between the COVID-19 tests offered at each tournament, which could put the health of these young, talented athletes at grave risk. The men's

¹ <https://www.si.com/college/2021/03/19/ncaa-committee-asks-investigation-womens-ncaa-tournament-weight-room>

² <https://www.instagram.com/p/CMkRJ2LswFp/>

³ <https://onherturf.nbcsports.com/2021/03/19/ncaa-womens-mens-basketball-weight-rooms-discrepancies/>

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

teams are being tested daily with rapid polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests. The women's teams are instead receiving daily antigen tests.⁶ According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, antigen tests are less expensive and less sensitive than the PCR tests.⁷ Antigen tests are also less likely to detect the virus earlier in the course of infection.⁸

Unfortunately, there is a clear pattern of the women's tournament receiving lower quality or less expensive goods and services than the men's tournament. While the men's tournament may generate more revenue,⁹ the women's tournament has long been successful in its own right. This year, ESPN is scheduled to broadcast all 63 games of women's March Madness,¹⁰ a clear indication of consumer interest in the event.

NCAA has a 22-year, multibillion-dollar deal with ESPN for broadcasting March Madness. Teams participating in the men's tournament earn a payout for their athletic conference for every game appearance until the Final Four. The total number of payouts each conference accrues during March Madness is distributed over six-year rolling periods. However, the women's tournament generates no such payouts for its teams and conferences.

Transparency with regard to the spending and revenue of the women's tournament compared to the men's tournament is needed to help bring equity to these elite tournaments. We, therefore, request that you provide responses to the following questions by Sunday, April 4—the date the women's championship game is scheduled to be played:

- 1) How much revenue did the women's tournament generate the last ten years? Please provide this information broken down by year.
- 2) Please provide the total operating costs of the women's tournament for each of the last ten years and the total operating costs for the men's tournament for each of the last ten years?
- 3) What additional payments is the NCAA receiving from ESPN for broadcasting the women's tournament now given ESPN is broadcasting all women's March Madness games?
- 4) For each women's tournament game played over the past ten years, please provide the total revenue from tickets, concessions, and apparel and accessories sold at the event?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter. If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Liz Amster at Liz.Amster@mail.house.gov or at 202-225-5516.

⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/19/sports/ncaabasketball/women-ncaa-tournament-weight-room.html>

⁷ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/resources/antigen-tests-guidelines.html>

⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/09/well/live/covid-coronavirus-testing.html#link-473adf82>

⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/19/sports/ncaabasketball/women-ncaa-tournament-weight-room.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/march-madness-womens-college-basketball-ncaa-tournament-11616155596>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kathleen M. Rice', with a stylized, flowing script.

Kathleen M. Rice (NY-04)
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo (CA-18)
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell (MI-12)
Member of Congress

Lisa Blunt Rochester (DE At-Large)
Member of Congress